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PROGRAM Comment on the News STATION WRC Radio
NBC Network

DATE May 10, 1979 5:50 PM CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Full Text: SALT II

JOHN CHANCELLOR: This is John Chancellor on the NBC Radio Network with Comment on the News.

President Carter says that the ratification of the SALT treaty with the Soviet Union is, and these are his words, "the most important single achievement that could possibly take place for our nation during my lifetime." Well, maybe.

Critics of the treaty disagree, and there's going to be a lot of arguing about this in the next few months. Much of that argument will be technical but some of it should be political. For one thing, if there is no SALT agreement, will that lead to huge and uncontrolled spending for more nuclear arms by the Soviets and the United States? Possibly not.

Under the terms of the treaty there will be huge but controlled spending. Both countries can improve the quality of their weapons under the treaty, as is being done with the new American Mark 12-A warhead. The Soviets can build up their arsenal of submarine-launched missiles. Development of the cruise missile can continue and the United States can proceed with the new MX mobile missile, a system with a price tag of from 20 to \$40 billion.

SALT is not disarmament. It is, however, a way of managing armaments, and that is important in the nuclear world.

If the United States and the Soviet Union fail to agree on a way to manage these strategic weapons, other countries will have to take that into account. There is some apprehension among people who follow these matters that West Germany might shift its policy a bit if there is no SALT agreement, shift to a

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policy of being more accomodating to the Soviet Union. Were that to happen it could accurately be called a calamity.

George Ball, the former Under Secretary of State, says that Europeans would interpret a rejection of the treaty as a failure of American responsibility. And in other parts of the world the Soviet Union would be seen as the responsible party. In effect, the treaty has been ratified by the Soviets.

So there's much more to SALT than a nuclear balance between the two super powers. If the Senate and the President can't get an acceptable treaty ratified, the world will be a different place, and from an American viewpoint, a more dangerous place.

John Chancellor, NBC News.